

# Indian Health Service Medical Staff Credentialing and Privileging Guide

United States Public Health Service  
Indian Health Service  
September, 2005



Prepared by:

**Martin L. Smith, D.Ph., M.B.A.**  
Medical Staff Credentialing Coordinator  
USPHS Claremore Indian Hospital  
Claremore, OK

**Michele F. Gemelas, R.Ph.**  
Portland Area IHS Credentialing Consultant  
Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center  
Warm Springs, OR

Developed under the direction of the Office of Clinical and Preventive Services Indian Health Service Headquarters

## I Introduction

The purpose of this guidebook is to assist the medical staffs and governing bodies of the Indian Health Service (IHS), tribal, and urban (I/T/U) health care facilities in carrying out their responsibilities to carefully credential and privilege all medical staff members.

**Note:** *This guidebook is meant to be a resource manual, not a statement of IHS policy. See Indian Health Service Circular No. 95-16, Credentials and Privileges Review Process for the Medical Staff (Referred to throughout this document as IHS Circular 95-16), revised by Indian Health Service Circular No. 96-06 Errata Notice for IHS Circular 96-16, or most current version for the applicable policy.*

The fundamental concepts of credentialing and privileging have not changed since the second edition of the Indian Health Service Credentialing Resource Handbook (1997). However, advances in technology and the development of the Internet have significantly changed and enhanced the process in which we collect and verify credentials information.

In addition to providing resource information, this document attempts to provide the reader with a more detailed description of the credentialing and privileging process. It attempts to incorporate both Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) and Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) concepts. JCAHO and AAAHC standards and guidelines are dynamic in nature and change periodically. Therefore, this guide should only be utilized as a supplement to and not as a substitute for current IHS, JCAHO, or AAAHC guidelines.

This guide provides:

- a description of the credentialing process and the steps that must be taken to verify the credentials of any practitioner applying for medical staff membership or clinical privileges,
- a list of credentialing websites,
- sample letters and forms, and
- a glossary of commonly utilized credentialing and privileging terms.

The various forms, letters, etc. are sample formats that have been found to be useful in some facilities; they may be copied and used as-is, modified to meet local needs, or ignored.

Credentials are a practitioner's documentation of education, clinical training, licensure, experience, current competence, health status, and ethical behavior.

Verification of credentials data is required to ensure:

- The individual requesting privileges is in fact the same individual who is identified in the credentialing documents
- The applicant has attained the credentials as stated
- The credentials are current
- There are no challenges to any of the credentials